

Kushana

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Kushanas

Another historical race that ruled in India was that of the Kushana. After the death of the greatest Mauryan emperor, Asoka, in 232 B.C., the Mauryan Empire began to crumble. The provincial governors, no longer fearful of his authority, made their provinces independent kingdoms. The religious tolerance of Buddhism which was characteristic of Asoka's reign soon disappeared. The last Mauryan kings completely rejected Buddhism and returned to the traditions of Hinduism, while the empire itself declined because of an increasing lack of a warlike spirit, factionalism at court, and external threats. The downfall of the great Mauryan empire in 184 B.C. caused a period of disorder in India. In the 1st Century A.D., a Central Asian, peoples known as the Kushans, who split from the Yuechi tribes in Mongolia, led by Kanishka, established a kingdom at Gandhara, in the Indus River region. Kanishka maintained his power from 90 to 110 A.D., mainly through wise diplomatic relations. He had close ties with the Roman empire, whose eastern frontier was only 500 miles away. Heavy trading developed between the two states. The Roman history records that ambassadors were sent to the court of Trajan (98-117 AD) by the Indian kings, but it is unclear whether it is by Vima or Kanishka. India bought little but sold a great deal of silk, spices, and medicinal herbs, and thus came out favorably in the trade balance. Like Asoka, Kanishka converted to Buddhism. Some of the coins found in Bactria leads to the suspicion that Heraus (Also Heraios or Sanab) was probably the first Kushana King. Heraus (5 BC - 45 AD) may be a father of Kujula Kadphises and an ally of the Greek kings and shares the same title in his coinage. Vima Taktu succeeded Kujula at 80 AD and reigned for the next 15 years successfully. Kanishka's predecessor Vima Kadphises (95 - 115 AD), the son of Vima Taktu expanded the territory by conquering Afghanistan and north-west India. These are 5 kings who ruled before Kanishka: viz. Heraus, Kujula-Kadphises, Kujula-Kara-Kadphises, Vima Takto and Vima-Kadphises. Kadaphes or Kadphises, is also called the dynasty of 3 rulers, who reigned in Kabul from the downfall of the kingdom of Vikramaditya. Sir Walter Elliot says the Kadphises and Kanerki were Indo-Scythic invaders who established themselves in the north of India and even penetrated in the Deccan. Coins of Kadphises have been found in the Ganjam district. and Madras. Hercules worship was readily borrowed from the Greeks by the wild Scythians, as a mere reverence of physical strength. The Kohistan is supposed to be the district of the rise of Kadphises, while the Kabul valley was subject to Indian rule; and while there, the chief seems to have retained his Scythian title and rude worship of Heracles. Afterwards overpowering the Indian governor who had followed Vikramaditya into the Kabul valley and Panjab, he and his descendants seem to have adopted the Hindu religion, coining with Greek, and dropping their Saka title. In a gold coinage by a Kaphises king, Siva occurs in the mixed male and female character, and very generally accompanied by the bull Nandi. Kanishka the glorious ruler of the Great Kushana empire at 115 AD (date is still unreliable) (53?-123? or 78?-144? AD) started reigning the empire (some theory says he was never related to Vima Kadphises). He ruled in Kashmir and NW India in the first century, about AD 40., but his sway extended to both sides of the Himalaya, from Yarkand and Khok and to Agra and Sind. Kanishka enlarged the Kushana empire into Turkestan, Uzbekistan, Khorasan, Tajikistan Kashmir and northern India. His capital was Purusapura (Peshawar), Mathura being a second (winter?) capital.. He may have crossed the Pamirs and subjugated the kings of the city-states of Khotan, Kashgar, and Yarkand (now in Chinese Turkistan). Kanishka, Hushka and Jushka are 3 Turushka kings mentioned in the Raja Tarangini. Their names are also found on coins. The Manikyala tope was built by Kanishka, as was a stupa at Pushupur (Peshawar). Although he honoured the Zoroastrian, Greek and Brahmanic deities, Kanishka is mostly remembered for convening the fourth great Buddhist council in Kashmir. Most of what is known about Kanishka derives from Chinese sources, particularly Buddhist writings. When Kanishka came to the throne is uncertain. His accession has been estimated as occurring between his reign is believed to have lasted 23 years. During his reign contacts with the Roman Empire led to a significant increase in trade and the exchange of ideas; perhaps the most remarkable example of the fusion of eastern and western influences in his reign was the Gandhara school of art, in which Greco-Roman classical lines are seen in images of the Buddha. His successors Huvishka-I (140-180 AD), Vasudeva-I (180 - 210 AD) ruled the Kushana empire successfully till 210 AD. After the death of Vasudeva-I, the descendants of Kanishka, Kanishka -II (210 - 230 AD), Vashishka (230 - 250 AD), Kanishka-III (255 - 275 AD), Vaskushana (275 - 290 AD), Vasudeva-II (290 - 310 AD) and Shaka (325 - 345 AD), Xandesh (335 - 336 AD), Vashishka (350 - 360 AD), Vasudeva-III (360 AD - 365 AD) (in chronological order) held onto power by holding the Kabul valley, though the Kushana power had declined totally. Kipunada (350 - 375 AD) seems to be the last king who was the descendent of the little Kushanas. (A series of inscriptions in Saroshkti give a continuous run of dates from 2 to 98 for the Kushan :kings Kanishka 1 - 23 Vasishka 24 - 28 Huvishka 28 - 60 Vasudeva 67 - 98). Vima Kadphises revolutionized the monetary system by introducing gold coins to the existing

copper coinage. The non usage of silver in their coinage were probably due to world wide shortage of silver. Minting forged coinage of small inferior contemporary silver coins could be one of the reasons to mint pure copper and gold coins. The gold weight standard of about eight grams seems to be copied from the Roman coins of the first century. The bullion Roman coins would have seen the melting pots of Kushana mint for its coinage. The Kushana empire being in a strategic location for trade of rare goods from China, Central Asia, Alexandria and Antioch explains the prosperous monetary economy of Kushanas. The coinage of Kujula Kadphises are all of copper. The gold of Vima Kadphises were struck in three denominations, the double stater, the stater, and the quarter stater (Dinara as Kushanas named it). The copper coins were struck in three varying weights too. Zathos Kadaphes Khoranos, BC 20. On the reverse of the coins is a sitting figure, with the arm extended, and wearing a loose flowing Indian dress. They have monograms the same as the Azes coins. Vohemo Kadphises BC 5. His copper coins have the king standing in a with coat, boots and cap, his right hand pointing downwards to an altar or pile of loaves, and having a trident separate on one side and a club on the other. The reverse has the Siva Nandi bull. The readings of the Aryan inscriptions on the coins are somewhat different, and it is suggested that the words Koroso, Kosoulo, Koranos and Zathos were titles short of royalty. It has been suggested that the Kushans were overpowered by a fresh wave of Scythians under the Kanerki kings. Undopherres, AD 40, calling himself king of kings in Greek, and in Aryan Maharaja Raja Rajasa, Tradatasa, Mahatasa, Pharahitasa. Gondopherres or Gondophares BC 55, who took the same Aryan title Pharahitasa. Abalgasus AD 70 / 80, in Aryan Abakhafasa. Captain Cunningham describes the Aryan legend on the coins to be of the saviour king Abagasus, younger son of Undopherres. The successors of Kanishka ruled for a hundred and fifty years, but Kushana power gradually diminished. Events in Persia were once again to intervene in the history of north western India. In A.D. 226 Ardashir overthrew the Parthians and established Sassanian ascendancy. His successor conquered Peshawar and Taxila in the mid third century and the Kushana kings were reduced to subsidiaries of the Sassanians.

A stone on which a Sanskrit inscription is engraved, can be found in the library of the Bombay University : "In the year 45 of the great king Devaputra Hivishka, in the third (month) of the rainy season, on the fifteenth day-on this (date specified as)above, an image of the blessed incomparable Sakya Muni was installed in the Rosikavihara in Alike, by the female layworshipper Khvasich for the gift of health for herself and for the welfare and happiness of her parents, her worshipful mistress, of the mother of Samanik of Samanik of Javaka, of the mother of Javaka and of all creatures." The inscription refers to the reign of the Kushana king Hivishka, with whose name is coupled the title of Maharaja only, without the usual additional title Rajatirja. The object of it is to record the installation, by the female lay-worshipper Khvasich of the statue of Sakya Muni on the pedestal of which it is engraved. It is dated, in the year 45, on the fifteenth day of the third month of the rainy season. This year 45 is one of a series of dates occurring in inscriptions of the Kushana kings Kanishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva, and ranging from the year 4 to 98. It was Fergusson who first started the theory that Kanishka was the originator of the Saka era, and that the dates of Kanishka and his successors are therefore years of that era, based on Roman coins found at the Ahin Posh tobe near Jalalabad. Since here the word Saka is associated with the word Korano, Oldenberg argues that the Kushanas were Sakas, and that Kanishka was therefore of the 'Saka nationality, because the word Korano found on the coins is associated with Saka. Further, he observes that as from the evidence of his coins Kanishka appears to have reigned about the close of the first century A.D. and there was no other Indian Prince at this time so famous as Kanishka, and as we find an era with reference to which the inscriptions of Kanishka and his successors appear to have been dated, Kanishka was the founder of the Saka era. But Cunningham, who carefully examined the legends on the diverse coins of this king arrived at the conclusion that the correct reading is Sanab and not Saka. The Saka extraction of Kanishka thus remains unproved since the reading of the legend on the tetradrachm in the British Museum from which it is inferred, has been shown to be erroneous. Kalhana's Rajatarangi speaks of Kanishka as sprung from the Turushka race which corresponds to the modern Turks. Al Buruni tells us a legend which makes Kanika, i.e. Kanishka, a descendant of the Turk family called Shahiya, founded by Barhatakin, whom he describes as wearing "Turkish dress, a short tunic open in front, a high hat, boots and arms." And this is clearly attested by the royal figures on the coins, notably of Wema-Kadphises and Kanishka. About the costume and features of Vima-Kadphises, Kanishka's predecessor. H. Wilson makes the following remarks: "He wears a conical cap turned up at the sides, a tunic close to the body over which is a sort of strait coat: boots are invariably worn, The features are not those of the Mongol but of the Turk tribe.") Thus Kalhana's statement, the legend mentioned by Al Buruni and the figures on the coins of Vima-Kadphises and Kanishka so thoroughly corroborate one another as to leave no doubt in regard to the Turk extraction of Kanishka. Further, among the foreign powers with which Samudragupta entered into alliance, are mentioned in his Allahabad pillar inscription Daivaputrashahishahanushahi-Saka-Murunda. There is some difference of opinion with respect to the first three words of this long Sanskrit compound. Cunningham takes them all as a single compound title referring to a Kushana prince. Mr. V.A. Smith however proposes to take them separately, each designating a different king. But whatever may be the explanation of the parts: Sakas are distinguished from the Devaputra kings of whom Kanishka was one. Kanishka therefore was not a Saka and hence cannot be the founder of the Saka era. Cunningham regards

Chashtana to be the founder of the Saka era, as the dates on the coins and inscriptions of his successors are undoubtedly 'Saka years'. The dates of Nahapana, he says, must be reckoned from the time of Maues (100 BC). Nahapana thus flourished about the middle of the first century BC. He places Gotamaputra 'Satakarni' about 78 AD, and the Khakharatas, who are said in Nasik Inscription No. 18 to have been exterminated by Gotamaputra Satakarni, are in his opinion, the descendants of Nahapana. He thus makes the former a contemporary of Chashtana, maintaining that the mention of Chashtana and Pulumayi by Ptolemy proves neither that the two kings were contemporaries nor that they were not far removed in time from the Greek geographer (150 AD). It is noteworthy that the Kaniska, bore the titles 'Chen-to' (tsien-da) and 'chan-t'an' (tsian-dan), as we gather from the Chinese translation of the 'Sutralankara'. These titles are derived from the Sanskrit word for moon chandra (chanda). Kadphisa and Kaniska considered themselves as the kinsmen of 'Chastana', the son of 'Ysamotika', one of the Saka satraps of Saurashtra and Malwa. Similarly, Cunningham makes contemporaries, Pulumayi and Jayadaman the sons of Gotamaputra 'Satakarni' and Chashtana respectively. He further assigns a reign of 25 years to Jayadaman (100-125 AD) and also to his son Rudradaman (125-150 AD). According to Pt Bhagwanlal Indra, his reign lasted for three years, because of the rareness of his coins and not 25. He states that the 'Saka era' dates from the coronation of Nahapana and marks his conquest of Gujarat and Western Dekkan. The latest known date 46 of Nahapana is therefore the 46th year of his reign as well as of the Saka era, and he finds a confirmation of this in the effigy of Nahapana on his coins the type of which passes from his youth to his old age. Nahapana's title Kshatrapa makes it likely that he was a dependent prince.

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